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ABSTRACT

Students individually or in committees with teacher guidance need to develop a portfolio to indicate the quality of school work that has been accomplished. Student portfolios are a purposeful collection of work that illustrates the students' efforts, progress, and achievement in given areas. Portfolios provide ongoing and authentic records of student performance that enable: (1) students to reflect upon and articulate their own progress; (2) teachers to tailor instruction to the students' strengths and needs and to use the students' work as the basis for instructional planning; (3) parents to gain greater insight into their children's learning; and (4) administrators and policymakers to base decisions about student achievement on authentic and meaningful information. The development and use of portfolios should be a way for pupils to reflect upon their progress and work toward higher achievement levels. (Contains 10 references.) (RS)

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Reading, Portfolios, and the Pupil

by Marlow Ediger

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READING, PORTFOLIOS, AND THE PUPIL

Students individually or in committees with teacher guidance need to develop a portfolio to indicate the quality of school work that has been accomplished. Isele (1995) raises questions and provides answers pertaining to portfolio development. The following are provided:

What are student portfolios? A purposeful collection of work that illustrates the student's efforts, progress, and achievement in given areas.

What is the purpose of a student portfolio? Portfolios provide an ongoing and authentic record of student performance that enable:

students to reflect upon and articulate their own progress.

teachers to tailor instruction to the students strengths and needs and to use the student's work as the basis for instructional planning.

parents to gain greater insight into their child's learning.

administrators/ policymakers to base decisions about student achievement on authentic and meaningful information.

What are benefits of portfolios? Portfolios

* portray student's processes as well as products.
* involve students in reflecting upon their own learning, and thereby, promote individual responsibility, self- sufficiency, and active involvement.
* increase the time spent on learning and the quality of teaching.
* represent what students can do in a variety of real life situations.
* provide a tangible and meaningful basis for discussions among students, teachers, and parents.
* link curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
* inform instruction.

Portfolios then go beyond the recording and viewing of test scores of student achievement. Norm and criterion referenced test results are included, but not the sole content to use in appraising learner progress. Teacher written test results may also be incorporated into a portfolio for the individual student. Student teachers and cooperating teachers whom I supervise in the public schools assist their students to develop portfolios. Items placed in a portfolio by pupils have included the

following:

1. written work pertaining to prose, poetry, outlines, summaries, and journal writing.
2. art work and construction activities completed directly related content in reading.
3. snapshots of dioramas and models developed in ongoing lessons and units of study in reading involving activity centered methods of teaching.
4. videotapes of dramatic experiences pertaining to reading comprehension.
5. computer software programs completed on specific reading skills such as phonics and context clues.
6. cassette tapes of recorded book reports given by the learner.
7. recordings of oral reading and reader's theater.
8. student records in responding to computer assisted instruction (CAI) lessons and units.
9. written products from using the word processor.
10. self evaluation by the pupil using rating scales, check lists, diary entries, and logs.

A wide variety of products and processes should be in evidence in a portfolio. Interested, responsible persons, especially parents, may then see the quality of work performed by a pupil. The evidence is there for parents and others to see what the learner has accomplished and what needs to be worked on to further progress of the student.

Collins and Dana (1993) suggest that four kinds of data or evidence be in a portfolio. These are:

1. artifacts are documents normally created or used in schools such as tests, book reports, work sheets, projects, etc.
2. reproductions are items that typify events of activities in which students normally engage but often are not captured. For example, audio/ video taped discussions, presentations or photographs of projects, or other work.
3. attestations often take the form of a letter prepared by someone other than the student verifying his/ her work or contributions.
4. productions take two forms, both of which are especially created for the portfolio. The first is a reflective entry which articulates what was learned from the the project or activity. The second is a caption affixed to each portfolio entry describing what it is and why it is included.

Pupils with teacher guidance need to have definite categories in mind when having the former develop a portfolio. These identified categories assist the learner in thinking about how to organize the portfolio and its contents.

Strengths of Portfolios

Teachers and administrators need to look for better means of evaluation of pupil progress than what was used previously. Changes need to be made when moving from what is to what should be. What should be is based on the best thinking possible in education. Using test scores to reveal learner progress and achievement was weighed and found wanting. Norm and criterion referenced test results provided some data on pupil achievement, but the scope was very narrow in showing what a pupil knows and can do. Test results provide numerical scores, such as in norm referenced tests results indicating how one pupil compares with others in taking the same test. Or in the case of criterion referenced tests if a pupil has or has not achieved predetermined objectives. Numerical results do not indicate how well a person communicates orally or in writing. The tests also are taken outside the framework of the ongoing lesson or unit of study being presented. Pupils then lack ownership of indicating how well they are doing in each curriculum area.

The portfolio shows actual work of the learner be it in oral and written communication, construction work and art endeavors, dramatic experiences, and the making of models, among others. Gilman and Rafferty (n.d.) list the following advantages of portfolios:

1. they evaluate both product and process.
2. they allow an integration of learning and assessment.
3. evaluation is not limited to a single score.
4. they provide more information about a student's progress.
5. they encourage students to take charge of their own learning.
6. students feel they are part of the assessment process.
7. they help develop the skills for life-long learning.
8. they may actually reduce the daily burden of grading papers.

9. the information gained from portfolios is meaningful and substantial.

10. they provide a continuous example of a child's work in a context that is relevant and understandable.

11. they assess global understanding and thinking skills.

12. it is a form of evaluation that is bound to have parental approval.

Gilman and Hassett (1995) indicate three broad purposes for developing portfolios. The first is that purpose should be involved in portfolio development. Thus reasons exist for pupils with teacher guidance working on portfolios for the former. Portfolios provide information to teachers, parents, and administrators as to what a pupil has learned and achieved. Portfolio content might also be used for diagnostic purposes in determining where specifically a pupil needs more assistance in learning. Remediation might then be provided to fill these voids. The concepts of diagnosis and remediation are important in teaching/ learning situations. Second, portfolios chart interests and growth of a pupil. Learners may indicate specific areas of growth and achievement. Thus which curriculum area is the pupil experiencing the most achievement? What interests does the learner possess such as in what has been written in self selected topics? Third, opportunities are provided pupils to engage in higher levels of cognition when deciding upon products and processes that should or should not go into a portfolio.

Pupils are actively involved in portfolio development. they are not passive recipients of knowledge here. A hands on approach in learning is emphasized. Portfolios have become important in revealing what pupils have learned and achieved. The state of Vermont requires pupils with teacher assistance to develop portfolios for the former. Bimes-Michalak (1995) wrote the following pertaining to the portfolio zone:

It is easy to see why portfolios have been embraced. According to research and a growing number of teachers, they link assessment to instruction, document growth over time, give...ownership and

responsibility for... learning, making learning more collaborative, inform instruction, and communicate assessment information to parents, school officials, and the public. They are an assessment tool every classroom needs.

Portfolios should cover a period of time, not just for a lesson or unit of study. Development of a portfolio should be ongoing. It is important for the portfolio not to become too voluminous. Care must then be given to determine what is salient and worthwhile to place into a portfolio.

Engel (1994) discusses the need for a new paradigm in the evaluation of pupil achievement; she wrote the following pertaining to portfolio use;

Authenticity can be seen as consistency in time - between what is happening now and what is intended for the future. An action is authentic when aligned with its long term purposes - when one can look toward the future and see the connections between the means and the end. In assessment, authenticity implies the results can be trusted partly because the methods support long term purposes. Authenticity can be contrasted with expedience. The former is justified by a long term view; the latter by a short term perceived need.

What is contained in a portfolio represents authentic work and assessment in that the products and process come directly from the pupil within context of diverse learning opportunities. Test results would tend not to represent authentic work in that the test is given outside the framework of ongoing tasks and activities.

Tyler, Ralph (1949) raised four questions that are still very vital pertaining to teaching pupils. These are:

1. which objectives should pupils achieve?
2. which learning activities need to be provided so that pupils might achieve the stated objectives?
3. how should the subject matter be organized so that pupils might achieve more optimally?
4. how should pupils achievement be evaluated?

These are four questions that all teachers need to ask in

planning and implementing instruction. Data for the portfolio might well come from answering these four questions. Certainly stated objectives are important in portfolio development. Learning activities provided pupils secure process and product results for the portfolio. Organization of related subject matter taught will be reflected as to what goes into the portfolio. Thus a separate subjects, a correlated approach, a fused curriculum, and/ or an interdisciplinary procedure will have its results inherent in the portfolio.

There are additional questions that need to be raised pertaining to portfolio content:

1. how many objectives in teaching and learning should stress knowledge, skills, or attitudes?

2. what kind of sequence is desired in the curriculum --- a logical versus a psychological order of experiences for pupils?

3. how much stress should be placed upon a multimedia curriculum, including modern technology to aid pupil achievement?

4. which procedures should be used to appraise learner performance? The portfolio might well include diverse evaluation results, such as teacher written tests, norm and criterion referenced tests, discussions, products from learners, behavioral journals, diary and log entries, computer program results, as well as teacher observation, among others, to notice pupils achievement.

When viewing all the questions raised above, there are answers which might well provide information for a portfolio. A problem then arises as to how thick a portfolio should be? There is no precise answer to this question. Selected guidelines need to be given, however.

Entries for a portfolio should be relevant and vital. Unimportant and irrelevant materials need to be culled. Portfolio content should reflect salient information that may be viewed and appraised by responsible people. The viewers then should be able to ascertain achievement in processes and products of a pupil. Where the learner is presently achieving and which sequential steps of further learning

should be hypothesized from the portfolio content. It does take time for evaluators to assess the items in a portfolio. Careful appraisal is necessary of each portfolio. More than one competent, conscientious person should be involved in appraising a portfolio. Brown and Irby (1995) suggest that a major reason for portfolio development is to reflect upon improving teaching and learning. Educators today stress the importance of reflecting upon what has transpired in teaching so that improvement is an end result.

In Conclusion

The development and use of portfolios should be a way for pupils to reflect upon their progress and work toward higher achievement levels. There is a motivating ingredient in portfolio development and that is active involvement by learners in compiling a truly excellent device to inform others of personal progress in each curriculum area. The pupil is involved in a hands on approach in determining what should go into a portfolio and why. Wolf (1996) suggests teachers also develop their own portfolios. He wrote the following:

> Why this interest in teaching portfolios? Although portfolios can be time consuming to construct and cumbersome to review, they also capture the complexities of professional practices in ways that no other approach can. Not only are they an effective way to assess teaching quality, but they also provide teachers opportunities for self-reflection and collegial interactions based on documented episodes of their own teaching.
>
> Essentially, a teaching portfolio is a collection of information about a teacher's practice. It can include a variety of information, such as lesson plans, student assignments, teacher's written descriptions and videotapes of their instruction, and formal evaluations by supervisors...

A pupil's portfolio should compliment the teacher's portfolio. Both portfolios are developed to emphasize improved objectives, learning opportunities, and appraisal procedures. The end result should be that

pupils achieve more optimally in each curriculum area.

Teachers too should develop portfolios to should their own accomplishments and achievements. Ediger (1996) wrote:

I believe too that portfolios may be developed as a matter of personal interest and humble pride of achievements made in the educational arena. Certainly, pride is involved when one is pictured in the local newspaper showing how 100 day -- 100 days in the new school year were celebrated. The picture then in the local newspaper shows the many ways one's pupils have learned what makes for a set of 100 items, Much pride too comes from having received high ratings from the observational visit made to the classroom by the school principal. These awards and rewards definitely should become a part of the portfolio. They are relevant items to include. As the teacher reflects upon the portfolio contents, he/she will devise criteria in terms of what to include and what to omit, particularly when a portfolio might appear to become too voluminous.

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